

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE BLIND



*Established*—1893

*Statutory authority*—Chapter 79; Sections 1608-1625

*Administrative head*—STETSON K. RYAN, Executive Secretary

*Deputy administrator*—JEFFERSON D. HICKS, Administrative Assistant

*Central office*—Room G-4, State Office Building, Hartford; Telephone, 7-6341 Ext. 775

*Average number of full-time employees*—47

*Expenditures fiscal year 1951-1952*—

State Funds (including Capital Outlay) Gross	\$245,467.82
Sales and Service Fund	183,041.42
Vocational Rehabilitation Fund	26,964.23
Amelia M. Frost Fund	None
New Haven County Cotton Fund	4,216.05

*Organization structure*—Investigation and case work; education and counseling; rehabilitation and employment; home teaching and visitation; sales service and home industries; prevention of blindness; mother's counseling and the pre-school blind child; vending stand and business opportunities; deaf-blind; talking books for the blind; bookkeeping and accounts; office supervision-stenographic and filing; publicity and information; leisure time activities.

The Board of Education of the Blind is the oldest commission for the blind in this country. It was established by legislative enactment in 1893, and in the same year the Articles of Association of what is now the Connecticut Institute for the Blind were filed. The Board and Institute have continued to serve in their respective areas for a span of nearly 60 years. The Institute provides academic opportunities for blind youth at the School for the Blind, and trades instruction for blind adults at the Trades Department. Although the Connecticut Institute is a private corporation without stock, the General Assembly appropriated funds for erecting the buildings at both institutions and has liens on the property. The Board of Education of the Blind sends blind children to the School and adults to the Trades Department.

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There are never more than 2 or 3 per cent of the blind who are being educated and the name, Board of Education of the Blind, is a misnomer. A better designation would be Services for the Blind; for the Board provides a variety of services for the more than 98 per cent of the blind who never go to an institution.

The Board is composed of the governor of the state as chairman and the chief justice as vice chairman. Present members include: Marion Feuchtwanger of New Haven; Rev. Robert J. Shea of Hartford; and Mrs. James R. Miller of Hartford.

### THE NUMBER SERVED

We have rendered service to 1,988 clients of the Board the past year; and it is interesting to note that certain beneficiaries have been assisted in more than one area. Relief has been paid in the homes to 208 clients; relief in a workshop to 16. Transportation and clothing has been furnished 35 ,while 46 have been rehabilitated. We have furthered prevention of blindness for 239; have provided teaching service in the homes for 655, and sales service for 429 consignors. Psychological tests have been administered to 27, special library service obtained for six, and lessons in weaving for one client. Board and tuition have been paid for 72 children at the Connecticut School for the Blind, and for three at the Royer-Greaves School for the Blind. Tuition has been paid for one client each at the American School of Massage (New Haven), Butler Business College (Bridgeport), McKeown Business College (Hartford), and Stone Business College (New Haven); also at Hartford Hospital in x-ray developing.

Services of a varied type have been performed for 1,818 clients.

### 388 NAMES ADDED TO REGISTER

Three hundred and eighty-eight names (289 adults and 99 children) have been added to the register the past year. A full 296 of these clients are blind within the limits ascribed to the definition of "blindness." Our records indicate there are now 3,100 blind persons in Connecticut.

### MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL CARE

The Board has expended \$9,887 the past year for medical and hospital services for 341 persons (adults 168, children 173). We have paid \$2,161 for eye specialists' services and \$4,063 for hospital care. Expenditures have been made for doctors' prescriptions, dental care, mental tests, hearing aids, laboratory tests, x-ray examinations, artificial eyes, eye glasses, etc.

In the prevention of blindness area we have served 435 clients, not a few of whom are children. We have spent \$1,255 for glasses for children and adults who have serious visual defects.

## 429 CONSIGN HAND WORK

The receipts in our home industries department have been \$29,-776.29. We have 429 consignors registered and Board workers have arranged for 229 sales of the products made in the homes, including pre-Christmas sales each of one week's duration in department stores in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven.

It was a pleasant surprise to find, in reviewing the work, that a blind woman in South Norwalk had hemmed 738 dish towels, and that in the present fiscal year the sale of her needlework by the Board had grossed about \$800.

## 186 REHABILITATION CLIENTS

During the fiscal year July 1, 1951—June 30, 1952, the rehabilitation program of the Board provided services to approximately 186 clients. Due to economic conditions in the industrial field, it was possible to place somewhat fewer blind people in factory jobs than in previous years. Of the approximately 3,100 blind persons in the state, 462 are gainfully employed and earning in excess of \$500 annually. The average earnings of the group as a whole amounts to approximately \$1,800 a year. The number of blind persons presently employed represents about 15% of the total blind population of the state.

Some of the new opportunities for employment of blind girls include dark-room x-ray development in hospitals and doctors' laboratories. This involves routine processing of x-ray films in a dark-room. The shortage of clerical workers has opened more opportunities to blind dictaphone transcribers. The increase in the enrollment of children in schools for the blind is offering an additional opportunity for a limited number of partially blind to become teachers in schools for the blind throughout the country.

During this past fiscal year the rehabilitation program which is conducted by the Board under the provisions of Public Law 113, has been allotted a total of \$27,123. This amount has been restricted because of the failure of Congress to allocate larger amounts to the states for rehabilitation purposes. Because of this restriction it has been necessary to spend a larger proportion of state funds for services to clients than in previous years. A total of \$9,909 state funds were used to carry the program for the past year which resulted in a ratio of 75 per cent federal funds to 25 per cent state funds.

## HOME TEACHING COMPLETES 30 YEARS

The home teaching work will begin its thirty-first year of useful service in September. We recall with what trepidation we started the work in September, 1921, with two blind teachers, a man and a woman. Through the years the home teaching concept in some states has taken on certain aspects of case work but, here in Connecticut, we have held fast to the principle that it is the function of the home teacher to instruct in the braille characters and hand skills and to assist the newly blinded clients to adjust to the conditions imposed by the loss of sight.

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Our seven home teachers have given time and devoted effort during the present fiscal year to 655 blind adults, and have traveled 76,746 miles in visiting pupils in their own homes. A full 8,994 calls have been made, and 5,239 lessons given. One teacher has given all her time to 35 deaf and blind persons and has made 651 calls in their behalf.

### TEXTBOOKS RECORDED

Eleven high school, nine college and two non-student persons of both sexes with visual disabilities have been aided by textbook material produced by our Textbook Recording Project the present fiscal year. Ninety eight texts have been received for recording and our records indicate that 5,108 sides of commercial discs have been recorded by 24 volunteer readers who have been assigned to the work by the Volunteer Bureau of Greater Hartford.

The Textbook Recording Project was organized in 1949 to enable blind and visually handicapped students at the high school and college levels to study by themselves. There are young people, visually handicapped, who are able to read print only with difficulty or for a limited time, while there are others who use braille for reading and writing, but who are not always able to obtain current texts in that medium. The SoundScriber recordings, made by both men and women registered at the Volunteer Bureau of Greater Hartford, serve such young people who wish to study without restriction and at their own convenience.

### READERS FOR THE BLIND

It has been desirable in certain instances to pay qualified persons to read to blind students. Before the advent of the recording devices it was customary for blind students in college to depend on readers to enable them to prepare textbook assignments. Seven blind students of both sexes have profited by the use of readers paid by the Board. The price has been a nominal fee of 75 cents an hour.

### 682 TALKING BOOKS ON LOAN

Six hundred and eighty-two blind persons in 115 towns in the state are profiting by the convenience and enjoyment obtained by the loan of talking books by the Board. There are 58 of these appliances on loan in New Haven, 55 in Hartford, 33 in Bridgeport, and 18 in Waterbury. Six hundred of the machines on loan are the property of the federal government, 58 are privately owned, and 24 are state owned. Part of the machines in use have a radio attachment.

### BLIND CHILDREN AT CAMP

We are glad to report the admission of five blind boys and girls to camping privileges the summer of 1951 by the Connecticut Camping Association, and that a member of the Board's personnel is serving as

secretary of the Committee on Camping for Handicapped Children. Four of the blind children admitted to camps were Boy Scouts and a fifth was a young negro girl. These camp vacations were made possible by funds solicited from interested service clubs and individuals.

### THE COTTON FUND

We are pleased to note that uses are being found for part of the income of more than \$6,000 a year from the Cotton Fund. The donor, the late Ida Eaton Cotton, directed that the income should be used to encourage industry among the blind of both sexes in New Haven County. Two blind persons in New Haven County, a man and a woman, are being trained in stand operation with payments advanced from the Cotton Fund. About 25 per cent of the time of one worker in our sales room is being devoted to processing the work of consignors from New Haven County, and part of the salary of this worker is being charged to the Cotton Fund.

In the spring a contract was entered into with McKay Associates of New York, in the amount of \$600, to make a study of the possibilities for furthering the employment of certain of the older blind persons in New Haven County. Our records would indicate there are 451 men and women in that county over 60 years of age who are blind. A study has been completed by McKay Associates but the report has not as yet been filed with the Board.

A further expenditure of \$300 has been made for the purchase of a Short Wave Diathermy Unit from the Lee DeForest Laboratories for a blind osteopath, who was trained with funds provided by the Board, and subsequently set up in practice at an expense met in part by the Board but supplemented from private funds.

### SCHOOL INCREASE CAUSES CONCERN

There are now 30 boys and girls between the ages of five and 11 years at the Connecticut School for the Blind who are blind from retrolental fibroplasia. This is 43 per cent of the 72 children in residence at the School and is indicative of the seriousness of this baneful condition which has brought loss of sight the past decade to more than 121 children in this state.

The large number of small children who have been blinded by retrolental fibroplasia has caused serious concern to the directors of the Connecticut Institute for the Blind, who desire to proceed wisely in meeting the need for more dormitory and classroom space at the School occasioned by the influx of small blind children.

### FIVE YEAR ESTIMATE

The secretary submitted estimates of the expected enrollment at the Connecticut School for the Blind for the years 1952 to 1956, inclusive. While the enrollment, as of the present academic year 1951-

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1952, has been 72 pupils, the estimate submitted indicated a gradual annual increase in the number of pupils to a possible total of from 102 to 114 as of September, 1956.

The 1951 session of the General Assembly appropriated \$200,000 to meet installations at the School and Trades Department to conform to state regulations pertaining to fire protection and other needs. Such installations have been in the process of completion and will cost about \$70,000.

Plans have been prepared for a new building to be erected on the hillside west of the present main building. This would be similar in design to the present Founders' building on the hillside at the east of the main building. The estimated cost of such a building would be \$270,000.



